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ON COMMUNICATION

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⑩ DAVID JAMES/MOSS

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ABSTRACT

In recent years the growth of the public relations field has been phenominal. This growth has brought with it numerous definitions of public relations. After examining many of these definitions, the author selected five which are representative of the many to be found. Key concepts from each definition are singled out and discussed in their relation to the public relations process. A reconciled defini- tion, by the author, is then presented which incorporates the key con- cepts of the five representative definitions.

The rapid growth of public relations has also brought with it numerous public relations models. After a review of many of these models, the author selected three which are representative. The three models are discussed in terms of their respective authors and a common deficiency of the three is addressed. This deficiency stems from the fact that these models fail to emphasize and give proper attention to communication throughout the individual parts of their models. This failure to emphasize communication can cause a public relations program to fail if a practitioner follows its guidelines.

The author then presents a public relations communication model, which, if utilized, minimizes this potential for failure. The model is designed with communication as its core, and all parts of the model draw their substance from communication. The model is discussed in relation to each of its parts and their importance to achieving an effective public relations process.

The thesis concludes by presenting a working application of the author's public relations communication model and attempts to provide additional insight into why communication is equally important throughout the model and the public relations process.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Public relations had its beginnings when it was discovered that the force of peoples' opinions had the power to control human affairs. Since its beginning in these primeval social contracts, public relations has been a force of which government and management had to be keenly aware. In recent years the growth of the public relations field has been phenominal.[1] This large-scale, rapid, and spectacular expansion has brought with it numerous definitions of public relations which have been identified by the author in a literature review. This chapter will examine five of these definitions, present a reconciled definition, and discuss the purpose of the thesis.

Definitions

Definitions for public relations vary in length from five or so words to approximately one hundred. They appear in seemingly very short and easily understandable one-line sentences to very complex statements covering ten to twenty lines. McIntyre notes that:

> Defining public relations is like frisking a seal--you don't come up with much. I've read a hundred definitions of public relations and they're all correct, but none of them is any good. Public relations is a matter of degree, not definition.[2]

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[1]William L. Safire, The Relations Explosion (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963).

[2]Robert B. McIntyre, Defining PR Likened to Frisking a Seal, quoted in Information, Influence, and Communication, ed. Otto Lerbinger and Albert J. Sullivan (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1965), p. 10.

According to McIntyre, it is impossible to adequately define public relations because it is all encompassing and complex. This all encompassing facet is the reason there are over one hundred definitions. These definitions are correct, as far as they go, but they generally fail to define public relations in its entirety; therefore public relations is a matter of degree. This author also feels it is a matter of degree, but the degree has to be based on the execution of a definition and/or model.

The various definitions of public relations can be summed up in five examples. The definitions presented here are a representation of the many explored by this author. One is found in a popular dictionary, two are taken from two separate professional public relations organizations, a fourth is from a privately published newsletter, and the fifth comes from a typical textbook. As will be noted, certain key concepts are underlined in these definitions. The underlining has been added by this author for clarification purposes and is not part of the original definition. The underlining in the first definition points out the key concept. Underlining in the remaining four definitions points out key concepts which were not contained in preceeding definitions.

The first definition of public relations is taken from a collegiate dictionary.

> The art or science of deveoping reciprocal understanding and good-will between a person, firm, or institution and the public.[3]

This definition is short in length and in explanatory power.

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[3]Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, rev. ed. (1971), p. 690.

It does, however, identify one important concept by its use of the words reciprocal and understanding. The understanding which public relations develops should be of such magnitude that it is shared, felt, or shown by the organization and public alike. This reciprocal understanding brings the organization into a merging posture with the public. If this merging does not take place, public resistance is possible and this could lead to unfavorable public opinion.

The second definition originated from the deliberations of the British Council of the Institute of Public Relations and contains three additional concepts.

The deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its public.[4]

Daily relationships exist between people and groups of people without any assistance from public relations. These casual relationships are fundamental to civilization. Public relations should develop and encourage attitude and behavior which will complement reciprocal understanding between the organization and its public. This reciprocal understanding is accomplished through an effort that is both planned and sustained, the first concept. The effort must be established and maintained for any benefit to take place, concept number two. If a program, which is the result of the effort, is never put into practice or if it is terminated before results can take place, it is useless. The public of an organization, concept number three, may be both many and varied. Some examples of possible publics are, community, stockholders, employee, supplier, consumer, press, and government, to name

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[4]Sam Black, Practical Public Relations, with a Foreword by F. C. Gillman (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons Litd., 1962), p. 3.

but a few. An organization's public is anyone or any group in which

the organization needs to influence or establish reciprocal understand-

ing.

The third definition was constructed by the International Pub-

lic Relations Association.

> Public relations is a management function, of a continuing and
> planned character, through which public and private organizations
> and institutions seek to win and retain the understanding, sympathy
> and support of those with whom they are or may be concerned by
> evaluating public opinion about themselves, in order to correlate,
> as far as possible, their own policies and procedures, to achieve
> by planned and widespread information more productive cooperation
> and more efficient fulfillment of their common interests.[5]

This definition is more encompassing than the previous ones.

It contains some of the previously mentioned concepts with the addition

of four new ones. First, it states that public relations is a function

of management. Therefore, since management is the judicious use of

means to accomplish an end, public relations must be one of those means.

Second, the concept of evaluating public opinion is presented.

Hennessey gives this definition of public opinion: ". . . the complex

of preferences expressed by a significant number of persons on an

issue of general importance."[6] Public opinion is what everyone thinks

concerning the organization. It is a belief, based not necessarily on

fact, but on the perceptions of the public. The evaluation or measure-

ment of public opinion is simply finding out what people think.

The third additional concept centers around policies and pro-

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[5]Scott M. Cutlip and Allen H. Center, Effective Public Rela-
tions, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1971),
p. 506.

[6]Bernard C. Hennessey, Public Opinion, 34d ed., Edited by Julia
Stair (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1975), p. 5.

cedures. After public opinion has been assessed, the organization develops policies and procedures which will enhance and complement the attainment of favorable public opinion. These policies and procedures are then made known to the public through a program of information, the definition's fourth new concept. This concept of information is discussed in relation to the concept of action in the examination of the following definition.

Definition number four was developed and presented by the Public Relations News, a privately published newsletter.

> Public relations is the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance.[7]

Even though the wording is different, this definition is quite similar to the one just discussed. Another concept has been introduced however. That concept takes the form of executing a program of action. At this time a distinction needs to be made between a program of information and a program of action.

Before a program of information can be initiated there has to be a program of action. In other words, there has to be something to tell about. For example, the president of Parker Pen Company, Kenneth Parker, wanted to impress upon his employees and the local community the importance of free world trade. He felt this was needed because 40 percent of the company's business was being done outside of the United States. He first tried to accomplish the goal through his writings in an employee news letter and was unsuccessful. Then, a public relations practitioner suggested that company employees should be paid

[7]Public Relations News, October 27, 1947.

40 percent of their pay in foreign currency for a two-week period. They should also spend that money in normal purchases for a designated period of time in the city where the company was located, Janesville, Wisconsin. A program of action had now been formulated to increase the employees' and community's awareness of free world trade. The program of information could now be initiated to inform involved publics about the program of action.

Action programs are readily visible to the public. They are programs designed around public and/or organizational interests. Action is another reason public relations is a function of management, because action is primarily a management responsibility. Actions not only speak louder than words; they also provide the basis upon which words (the message of the information program) derive their effectiveness. The information program consists of the message, timing, and the media vehicle in which the action program is relayed to the public.

The last definition for examination is taken from a typical textbook.

> . . . public relations involves research into all audiences, receiving information from them; advising management of attitudes and responses; helping set policy that will demonstrate a responsible attention to these attitudes and responses; and <u>constantly evaluating the effectiveness of all programs</u>.[8]

Newsom and Scott's definition lacks the scope of definitions three and four but expresses more detailed guidance. For example, where definition three reads "evaluating public opinion," this definition reads "research into all audiences, receiving information from them." Another example is where this definition specifically states

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[8]Doug Newsom and Alan Scott, <u>This is PR: The Realities of Public Relations</u>, (Belmont, Ca.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1976), p. 5.

that public relations advises management of attitudes and responses
(public opinion), this function is implied in definitions three and
four.

One last concept is found in this definition which is left out
of the other four. It is a concept this author feels is extremely
important and should be a part of any public relations definition.
Public relations should constantly evaluate the effectiveness of all
programs. Evaluation of programs is the closing function of a public
relations process which is continuous in nature. It leads logically
back into the first step, research. Evaluation may be accomplished
through pre-testing and post-testing. Pre-testing involves putting a
program before a sample public to obtain reaction and to make adjust-
ments if necessary. Post-testing should uncover mistakes that need not
be repeated and point the way to improved programs.

It should be noted that this definition states that public
relations "helps set policy" where the other definitions read "identify
or correlate policy." On the surface these appear to be two different
concepts, but in fact they are closely related. The only difference
between the two concepts is the amount of authority given the public
relations department by management. For example, the public relations
department that identifies and correlates policy simply presents these
possible policies to management and then management, on its own, makes
the appropriate decision. A public relations department that helps set
policy has the added status of discussing the policies in person with
management during the decision making process.

A Reconciled Definition

As stated previously, the five definitions which have been presented contain underlining which was not part of the original definition. The underlining was added by this author in order to facilitate identification of the definition's new concepts when compared to the ones before it. There are a total of ten primary concepts in need of reconciliation in order to present a working definition of public relations. Following is the author's reconciled definition and the one which should be used when the term "public relations" appears in this thesis.

> Public relations is the planned and sustained effort of management to establish and maintain a reciprocal understanding between an organization and its publics. It is accomplished by utilizing public opinion as a basis for initiating a program of action, which is designed from organizational policies and procedures, and is disseminated to the organization's publics through an information program. All elements of the above process are constantly evaluated for effectiveness in terms of their objectives.

Public relations then, is an effort and a responsibility of management. The effort has to be sustained because public relations is operating within a constantly changing environment. In smaller organizations public relations is assigned as an "additional duty" to an individual who has other primary responsibilities. In larger organizations public relations is organized as a separate staff function with full time personnel. The scope of public relations is what management gives it and varies from being responsible for simple publicity to helping set policy.

Public relations can be an effective tool of management to enhance organizational success if it is planned and sustained. Planning is concerned with long range objectives to achieve the overall goals of the organization and short range objectives which are for

specific short term projects. The short range objectives should always be subordinate to the long range ones and in direct support of them. These objectives can be compared to the strategy and tactics of a military campaign. Strategy is the master plan for winning a campaign. Tactics cover skillful use of assets in winning the battles which contribute to a successful campaign.

There are two types of planning--remedial and preventive. Usually there is too much remedial planning, which involves trying to salvage an organization's image after it has made a serious mistake involving its publics. Preventive planning is precisely what the term implies, planning to prevent the need for remedial planning. In other words, the less remedial action required, the better the planning.

Management's public relations efforts are directed to the organization's publics to achieve reciprocal understanding between the two. Many public relations practitioners feel their responsibility of achieving this reciprocal understanding has been met when they have simply informed the public about their organization. Perhaps, if the organization's information is favorable toward its publics, reciprocal understanding is easily obtained. But what if the nature of the information is unfavorable? In this case, if reciprocal understanding is going to be achieved, it will require more than simply informing the public. It will involve the creation of an understanding between the organization and its publics. This is the responsibility of public relations. The second part of the definition states how this reciprocal understanding is achieved. It is the organization's responsibility to initiate a program of action which is based on public opinion.

Public opinion is an extremely complex and involved subject.

It is not the author's intention to cover the subject in an adequate manner, but merely to give enough of an explanation to enable the reader to see how public opinion fits into the public relations process.

A community is very important in the shaping of public opinion. It is the place where people see each other face to face and exchange ideas. The interpersonal network is the catalyst which keeps public opinion going. Lundborg puts it this way:

> Public relations, or public opinion, never crystallizes into anything important until one person says something to another person by word of mouth. Publicity, the printed word, may be the raw material of public opinion--the seed--but word of mouth, or "gossip" is the soil that feeds and fertilizes the seed into a living organism.[9]

Seed for the formation of public opinion has been planted when an issue arises which affects individuals in a personal manner. For example, public opinion has developed around the question and issue of busing. It is an issue that involves people in a personal manner. Another example which depicts the notion of public opinion forming, because people are affected personally, was the city of San Antonio, Texas firing its sanitation workers in the summer of 1978. This was certainly not a public opinion issue in Salt Lake City, Utah, but it was in San Antonio because it was affecting individuals there on a personal basis.

It should be remembered that public opinion is not necessarily based on fact. For example, an individual's opinion can be influenced by what he believes others are thinking. In other words, regarding opinion formation of an individual, it is not the actual beliefs of

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[9]Louis B. Lundborg, Public Relations in the Local Community, ed. Rex F. Harlow (New Hork: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 33.

others that are critical, but rather the individual's beliefs about those beliefs.[10] This influence may be so strong that a person will actually think one way but act and speak in a manner that he perceives will draw favorable attention from his friends.

Public opinion may also be generated by agenda setting. Information in the mass media is the only contact many individuals have with an organization. Recipients of the mass media learn not only about an organization, but also how much importance to attach to the organization from the amount of information in a news story and its position. In other words, the organization is being made public by increased salience which can be brought about by the agenda setting function of the media. If the organization receives headlines on a daily basis, it is eventually going to receive public attention and this will result in discussion and the surfacing of public opinion.

The evaluation or measurement of public opinion, as previously stated, is simply finding out what people think. The actual accomplishment of evaluation is extremely difficult due to the involvement of human attitudes, opinions, and behavior. Evaluation, or measurement of public opinion is attempted through such means as telephone surveys, mail out questionnaires, interviews, and informal personal conversations, to name but a few. It involves some combination of reading, asking, and listening.

Policy and procedure formation should be designed with the results of public opinion research as the core. Most organizations have a broad goal which is to maximize profits for its owners. It

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[10] James M. Fields and Howard Schuman, "Public Beliefs About The Beliefs Of The Public," Public Opinion Quarterly 40 (Winter 1976).

is difficult, if not impossible, to maximize profits if the organization's employees are discontent, if the public does not possess a favorable impression of the organization, or if the public does not believe in the quality of the organization's product. These are just a few examples of why public relations is an important function of management and why its policies and procedures should be based around public opinion. Policy and procedure formation should also be based around favorable aspects of public opinion regarding the organization. This formation of policy and procedure is the point where the organization first begins to move toward a merging posture with its publics to create reciprocal understanding. When policies and procedures have been finalized they become the program of action. This program of action is readily visible to the publics but it is reinforced through the information program.

Finally, all elements of the above process are constantly evaluated for effectiveness in terms of their objectives. The concept presented in definition number five has been altered in order to provide a larger scope. Not only should all programs be evaluated, but all elements concerning public relations.

Rationale

In recent years perhaps no aspect of management has received as much attention as the broad subject of communication. McGrath states that: "Among the heightened skills which will be required of corporate personnel in the future, twenty seven chief executives single out the critical need for special emphasis on improved communica-

tions."[11]

Many managers look upon communication as just another tool available to meet objectives. In other words, communication is just something the manager needs to understand, just as he needs to understand marketing principles, accounting, personnel, and so forth. This concept of communication stops considerably short of the role that communication plays in any organization. Philip Lesly sums up the crucial importance of communication when he states:

> Communication is no longer a tool of management, an instrument for conveying decisions. Communication is the substance of decision. Communication determines what any function or decision of any organization really turns out to be, because it determines what will happen.[12]

Communication is the determining factor concerning any function of management and public relations is a function of management. A potentially successful public relations communication model consists of approximately five to seven parts, depending on the specific model. All of these parts are dependent on communication. If communication is emphasized more strongly with the use of one part, the remaining parts will not be properly utilized and the entire model will become less effective.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is three-fold. First, Chapter II will analyze three public relations communication models which are

[11]Phyllis S. McGrath, Managing Corporate External Relations: Changing Perspectives and Responses (New York: The Conference Board, Inc., 1976), p. 12.

[12]Philip Lesly, The People Factor: Managing the Human Climate (Homewood, Ill.: Dow Jones-Irwin, Inc., 1974), p. 115.

representative of the ones from which a practitioner could choose.
Second, Chapter III will present this author's design of a public rela-
tions communication model. And third, Chapter IV will show the appli-
cation of the model.

The public relations communication model which is presented in
Chapter III is not a new and revolutionary design. The design and
major parts are similar to the three models discussed in Chapter II.
The difference centers around the notion of looking at communication
in a new perspective as it relates to a public relations communication
model. This difference is illustrated in Chapters III and IV along
with its potential effectiveness.

While this study attempts to identify the major elements
involved in public relations, it is deficient, as are all general
models, in offering precise direction or operation of these elements
within a specific environment. Public relations requires good communi-
cation and management skills as developed through experience. The
model should be a guide in organizing and attending to the variables
included but will not substitute for those skills or experience.

CHAPTER II

PUBLIC RELATIONS MODELS

Public relations models are like public relations definitions; there are many to be found[13] but they may be summed up in a few representative models. This chapter will present three representative models. The models selected are those by Marston (1963), Cutlip and Center (1971), and Simon (1976). This chapter will give an overview of the major parts of each model in the context used by the respective authors. It should be noted that these models cover a thirteen year period, 1963-1976, and all three appear to have a common deficiency. This common deficiency will be illustrated by the use of an actual case history involving public relations.

Marston's Model

The first model for discussion was presented in 1963 by Marston.[14] His model is in the design of a formula which used the letters R-A-C-E which stand for research, action, communication, and evaluation.

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[13]In addition to those noted below see: Lesly, The People Factor; H. Frazier Moore and Bertrand R. Canfield, Public Relations Principles, Cases and Problems, 7th ed. (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1977); Edward J. Robinson, Communication and Public Relations (Columbus, Oh.: Charles E. Merril Books, Inc., 1966).

[14]John E. Marston, The Nature of Public Relations (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963).

Research

The function of research consists of three steps which involve organizational management, the practitioner, and the public.

1. The first step of research needs to be a clarification of the public relations broad objectives between the practitioner and management. There should also be a clear understanding between the practitioner and management regarding adequate resources to accomplish these broad goals of the public relations department. Sometimes employees are unwilling to allot sufficient resources for the accomplishment of the objectives which have been given to the public relations department.

2. Research also involves assembling all the existing available information on the particular situation. This could include such things as past newspaper articles, an examination of the organization's correspondence files, review of committee meeting minutes, and conversations with people who are familiar with the situation. Additional research into existing information could involve an examination of the history and economics of the organization concerned. Personalities and politics also have to be considered. The more a practitioner knows about his organization and publics, the greater the potential for success of his program.

3. The third step in research is more difficult. It involves finding out the opinion of the public(s) to whom the message of the organization is to be sent. The purpose is to prevent such things as (1) antagonizing individuals, (2) trying to convert those who are already converted, and (3) wasting effort toward those who are unconcerned. This opinion research may be accomplished through existing

evidence and planned investigation, the latter usually involving some means of sampling.

Action

Action is the second part of the model. Public relations cannot tell the public about an organization unless there is something to tell. This something is a program of action which is readily visible to the public. Action can also be the vehicle to show the public that the company is listening. If action is taken on public opinion issues, it does show attentiveness. Finally, actions are the catalyst to make news about the organization and to gain public attention.

Communication

The third part is communication. Marston directs this function to the public(s) identified in the research step. The spreading of information is the backbone of publicity efforts. This is accomplished through an understanding of the nature of the many communication media and an understanding of the communication process itself.

Evaluation

The final step in this public relations model is evaluation. When actions have been taken based on research, and when messages have been sent out to the publics based on the actions, what is the result? Evaluation measures success and becomes the basis for the next move. Evaluation is a form of the first step, that of research.

Marston's model appears to fail to give proper emphasis to communication as the core of the entire model. This is vividly depicted by his statement of:

But the fact remains that communication is the one area in which a
working public relations man must be good, and that is why so much
of this book is devoted to the communications aspect of the R-A-C-E
formula.[15]

The communications aspect of the R-A-C-E formula is communicat-

ing with the targeted audience or public which has been identified

through research. By giving so much attention to communication at the

part of the formula designed to transmit the message to the public, a

practitioner could easily do the same thing by following the model.

The result could be inadequate research, action, and evaluation

because of inadequate attention to communication. This possibility

will be expanded in the latter part of the chapter.

Cutlip and Center's Model

This second model was taken from Cutlip and Center, (1971).[16]
Their model is called "The Process" and consists of four steps. These

steps are: (1) research/listening, (2) planning/decision making, (3)

communication/action, and (4) evaluation.

Research/Listening

The first step is research/listening and is also referred to as

fact-finding and feedback. The purpose of this first step is to deter-

mine the specific problem and publics. This determination is necessary

because, as an executive's responsibilities and authority increase, so

do the barriers that cut him off from receiving public opinion. Fail-

ure to monitor public opinion will result in organizational crisis.

Naturally, the public relations department has to advise management of

[15]Ibid., p. 166.

[16]Cutlip and Center, Effective Public Relations.

their findings. It should be remembered that identification of the problem is of little benefit if the corrective measures are directed to the wrong public. Cutlip and Center feel that methodical, systematic research is the foundation of effective public relations.

Planning/Programming

The second step of the process, or model, is planning and pro-gramming. Planning is designed to advance organization goals. The content of the program should tell the organization's history, ideals, and achievements; publicize its people, its policies, and its products or services; and it should project its plans for a better tomorrow. Timing is emphasized as a key element in this step. The calendar and opposition offer many opportunities for either positive or negative results because of proper timing. Finally, there is one type of event which cannot be forecast--a catastrophe. But it can be planned for in order to keep unfavorable public opinion at a minimum.

Communication/Action

The third step of Cutlip and Center's process is communication and action. The fundamentals of communication are discussed and identi-fied as: the communicator, the message, and the audience. Also included in this step is a discussion of Lippman's barriers to communi-cation, Roper's Concentric Circle, The Two-Step Flow Theory, and the Diffusion Process. The model relates their importance to the idea of the organization's program of action being relayed to the public.

Evaluation

The fourth step is evaluation. Lack of meaningful evaluation

causes many executives to regard public relations with a degree of suspicion and doubt. Evaluation research will forcefully remind the practitioner that dissemination does not guarantee communication. Unfortunately, however, the model once again relates this idea of communication to the stage where the organization is relaying information to the public, rather than emphasizing it throughout the four steps.

Cutlip and Center's public relations model contains the same deficiency as that of Marston's in that the emphasis on communication is isolated to one part of their model, rather than distributed equally among all four. For example, the statement is made that the third step, communication and action, ". . . comprise the main thrust in a public relations program. The other steps are designed to make this one effective."[17] This author agrees, but submits that the other parts of the model cannot give this proper support to the third part if communication is emphasized only in respect of organization to public, as opposed to the entire model. The latter part of this chapter will amplify this point.

Simon's Model

Simon is the author of the third model.[18] His model was published in 1976, five years after Cutlip and Center's and thirteen years after Marston's. The model consists of the five following parts: (1) public opinion, (2) research, (3) planning and programming, (4) communication, and (5) feedback.

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[17]Ibid., p. 237.

[18]Raymond Simon, Public Relations: Concepts and Practice, Edited by Jane C. Foss (Columbus, Oh.: Copyright Grid, Inc., 1976).

Public Opinion

An understanding of the nature of public opinion and how it forms is essential to a meaningful public relations practice. The public relations practitioner approaches public relations from the practical point of view, while the sociologists approach from a theoretical aspect. It should be realized that public opinion is not tangible. There is no fixed entity called "the public." The intensity of opinion describes the strength of feeling existing in that opinion. Simon also discusses the formation and evaluation of public opinion and his comments are similar to the ones discussed in Chapter I of this thesis.

Research

Research is the second step in this model. Simon views research as being paramount in the public relations process. He emphasizes this point by saying the other parts of the model make up the "rim" and research provides the "spokes" which support the rim. Research, among other things: (1) provides the means for the practitioner to use scientific methods to ascertain public attitudes and opinion, (2) provides factual input for programming, and (3) serves as an early warning system. The model then gives a short course in research procedures. These procedures are not repeated in this thesis because they are irrelevant to the purpose of the thesis. It should be remembered that research seldom tells the practitioner what to do; it is simply information upon which several courses of action may be planned.

Planning/Programming

Programming is the result of planning. The most detailed planning will still require improvision at the point of program implementa-

tion. The reason for this is because so many ingredients, necessary for completion of the planned program, are out of control of the planner. Most public relations projects involve a combination of events, people, and media that the practitioner has no control over. Nevertheless, there are three distinct advantages of public relations planning. First, the thinking that goes into planning helps clarify the problem. Second, the plan provides a blueprint and a working schedule. The third advantage is the creation and approval of a plan prevents misunderstanding. Effective planning and programming are dependent on a full understanding of the problem, not just the basics of the problem, but the broad implications. This step also involves the establishment of objectives and goals, and defining the audience. The latter should be accomplished prior to charting a program and putting it into action.

Communication

The fourth part of Simon's model is communication and he spends forty pages in explanation. Three basic considerations of communication are discussed: purpose, form, and process. Theories are presented along with a communication model which is made up of: (1) source, (2) message, (3) channel, and (4) receiver. The model is then dissected and the four parts are discussed in detail. As in the two previous models, the role of communication in relation to the model is directed solely to the publics of the organization, as opposed to each of the five parts of the model.

In an explanation of the planning and programming step of Simon's model, the following is found: "Unfortunately, many public

relations objectives and goals are fuzzy in conception and much too general in nature."[19] Perhaps, if communication was stressed as strongly at this step as it is at the step where the organization is relaying its message to the public, this problem could be minimized. If proper communication is utlized between management and the public relations staff, along with proper internal communication among the public relations staff members, objectives and goals have a greater potential of being precisely defined. Communication at this stage involves thorough discussions of all possible objectives and then a narrowing down to reveal clear-cut goals and/or objectives.

Feedback

The last step of this model is feedback, which is described as reporting, measurement, and evaluation. Reports state what has been accomplished and enables management to monitor the public relations function and the people responsible for carrying out that function. Measurement and evaluation are methods used to demonstrate the effectiveness of public relations. The difference between reporting public relations activities and measuring/evaluating is qualitative rather than quantitative.

The Common Deficiency

The purpose of presenting an overview of these models is not to explain in detail the various parts of each, but simply to provide the reader with a basic understanding of the content of each model as presented by the respective author. It is readily apparent that the three

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[19]Ibid., p. 208.

are quite similar with only minor differences.

While it is recognized that all three authors feel communication is essential to all parts of their models, they emphasize communication in one single part. This is done by actually labeling one of the parts as "communication." This part is always at the point where the organization's message is being transmitted to its publics. By labeling this part communication, and thus giving added emphasis to it, these models weaken their remaining parts which are designed to formulate the proper message, and determine the recipients and the time frame of transmission. This improper emphasis is the common deficiency of each model.

In the overview of each of the three models, this author stated that the common deficiency would be discussed further. In order to facilitate a fuller understanding of this deficiency, consider the following public relations case history and the comments regarding it.[20]

The case is centered around modification of activities at Bolling Air Force Base. Bolling is within five miles of the nation's capital city and at the time employed 4,600 military and civilian personnel. In 1957, a joint decision was made that it was no longer safe to have military aircraft flying from the Bolling area since it was so close to Washington's National Airport, one of the nation's busiest. Therefore, it was decided by the Federal Aviation Agency, Civil Aeronautics Authority, and the Department of Defense that all flying activities would cease from Bolling in 1962 and be moved to Andrews Air Force Base.

When the decision was made to move the aircraft, the Office of

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[20]Robinson, Communication and Public Relations.

Information at Bolling began its job of informing military and civilian personnel alike. A program of action to inform military personnel and the community was developed. This program was relayed to the public through news media releases. Military personnel were informed through local press and from duty supervisors. Evaluation revealed that despite all of the concentrated efforts to inform the public that only the flying operations at Bolling were being terminated, the general public had become convinced that Bolling Air Force Base was going to close down entirely. A few examples follow.[21]

One article in the Evening Star, June 29, 1960, stated: "The Bolling site is tentative. The Air Force announced that the field will be surplus next year." When the person who made the statement was asked where he got this information, he said, "Oh, we meant only the flying field part. Everyone knows the planes are leaving. We didn't mean to imply in our release that the base is closing."

A lieutenant reported: "My landlady tells me the base is closing. I tried to tell her only the aircraft were moving to Andrews, but she can't understand how you can have an air base without planes."

An airman's mother called long distance from Arizona and was told by the Washington operator: "I can't find a phone number for the base. Guess it's closed up. I know they've been planning to shut it down."

Critics of this case would inevitably say the reason for the confusion was the fact that the Bolling Air Force Base Office of Information didn't communicate with the public. Communication means to make common, and granted, no commonality was established by the Office of Information and the general public. But why?

The responsibility of the public relations staff (Office of Information) in this case was to communicate to the public that flying activities at Bolling Air Force Base were being terminated. This appears to be an easy assignment but, as demonstrated, confusion

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[21]Ibid., p. 12.

reigned. The problem could have easily developed because there was inadequate communication between the public relations office and the public during research. There could have also been inadequate internal communication among the public relations staff members during the planning state. The emphasis for communicating had been placed at the communication step of these representative models. The problem of confusion might have been eliminated, or at least minimized, if communication had been equally distributed throughout all parts of the public relations process.

For example, during the research step the public relations staff could have effectively used communication by choosing a sample public to obtain feedback regarding the degree of success of the prepared news releases. Communication of this type could have easily identified the potential confusion.

Communication could have been emphasized at the public relations staff meetings during the planning stage. Effective internal communication at this stage might have uncovered the conclusion that civilian's could draw concerning the "inconsistency" of an air base operating without any airplanes.

Proper communication at these two stages, research and planning, could have shown the prepared news releases were inadequate in relation to communicating the specific message to the public. Emphasis on internal public relations staff communication during the feedback stage could have prevented the confusion from escalating. As the first signs of confusion began to appear, strong communication among the public relations staff members would have resulted in immediate adjustments regarding news releases and points of release in order to immedi-

ately clarify the situation.

It should be realized that this author is not suggesting the three public relations models discussed earlier are totally ineffective and possess major flaws. This author agrees with each model's concepts and the narrative comments of their respective authors. The only problem is their misconception concerning the emphasis of communication at the point of relaying the message to the public as opposed to emphasizing communication equally throughout the various parts of their models. This misconception can create a problem, such as illustrated above.

The next chapter presents this author's public relations communication model. It consists of four major and four minor parts, and is designed to minimize the potential for problems related to a lack of communication in a public relations process.

CHAPTER III

A PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMUNICATION MODEL

The three public relations models discussed in the previous chapter are not necessarily each new and innovative in content. In fact, their basic parts are similar with the exception of Simon making "public opinion" a separate element rather than incorporating it into research as both Marston and Cutlip and Center do. All three models are referred to as simply public relations models because, as illustrated in Chapter II, communication is not stressed throughout the models.

The public relations communication model presented in this chapter is not necessarily new and innovative either, when the major parts are considered. It does contain however, a new perspective concerning the core of any public relations communication model. That core is communication, and it is stressed throughout the model.

It must be realized that the entire public relations communication model is reflective of a communication process. A process is a continuous operation and a communication process is no different. Therefore, if communication is not stressed throughout the public relations communication model, the model ceases to be a continuous operation. This is the deficiency with the models presented earlier and the reason the case history in Chapter II resulted in confusion; the communication process was not continuous.

The model, presented below, is continuous and interacting, with each part affecting the conception and execution of every other part. It is not oriented to single events, objectives, or parts; in other words, it is proportioned with no one part predominating. The model consists of four parts, two of them having two additional supporting functions. Most important, communication is the foundation for each part.
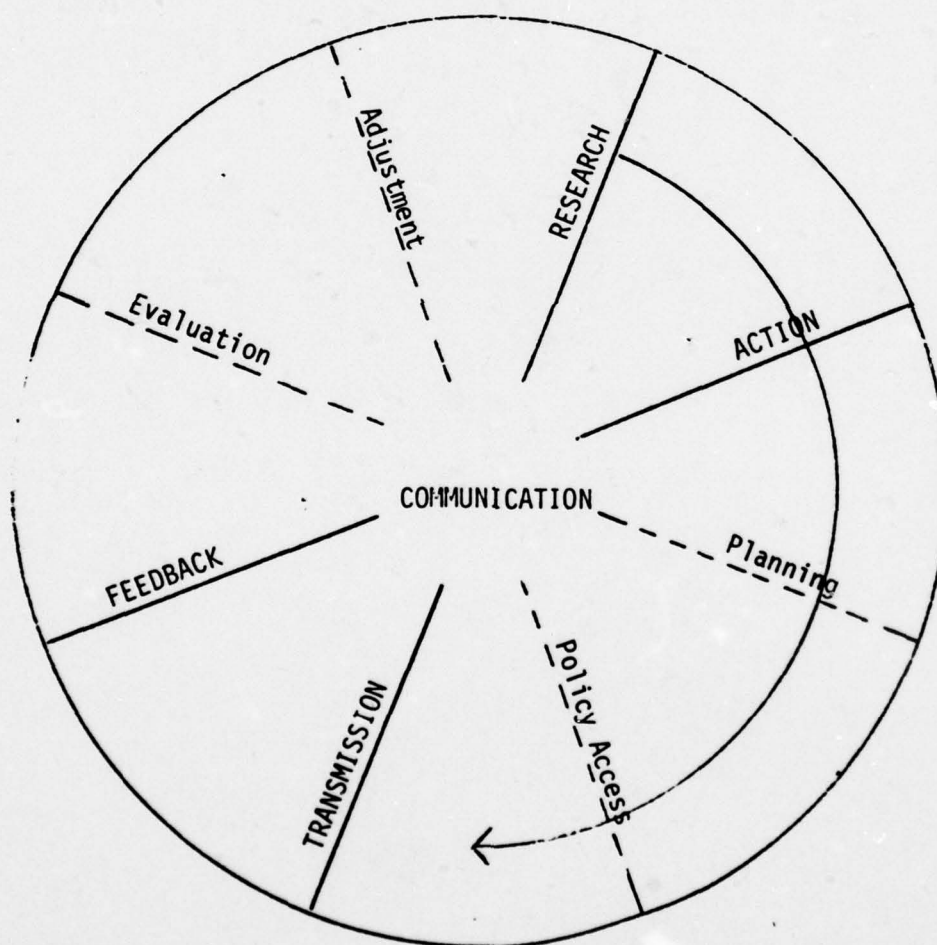
The starting point of the model is research to uncover attitudes, opinions, and public reaction to the organization. If a problem exists, research should also determine the exact nature. The model then moves clockwise to action which involves planning and policy access. The message of the organization (the result of research and action) is then transmitted to the public. It should be realized that the organization is continually expressing itself in various actions, all of which are not necessarily public relations directed. In addition, the organization may not support, in actions, the content of the message, even though management approval has been obtained. The final part of the model, feedback, will identify this problem, along with any others that might exist. Evaluation and adjustment are then made and the cycle begins again. Each element however, will not always be used in every application.

Research

The foundation of research is communication and listening. This communication and listening involves three specific groups: (1) the public from which opinion is being assessed, (2) the public relations staff itself, and (3) management.

The purpose of research is to determine the specific problem an organization faces. It may be very broad such as public attitudes about the organization, or it may be narrow such as reaction to the organization's new plant sign. In order for an organization to have effective public relations, it must be aware of the current attitudes, opinions, and beliefs the public holds toward it. The primary method used to determine the public relations problem is assessment of public

opinion which is accomplished through research.

As a review, there are several vehicles available for gathering public opinion information. These include telephone surveys, mail backs, television and radio talk programs, neighborhood meetings, on-the-street interviews, at home interviews, and informal personal conversations, to name just a few. Mechanics involved in the gathering of this information are: (1) identification of the universe to be sampled, (2) determination of sample size and type, (3) construction of the questionnaire, (4) training of interviewers, and (5) fieldwork. Details concerning all aspects of research are beyond the scope of this thesis but are readily available elsewhere.

Public relations responsibilities are to support management in the attainment of their responsibilities. Public relations is a staff function where management is line. This means that management is ultimately responsible for the success or failure of any public relations program. Management will therefore want to be shown how a particular research project will help them meet their responsibilities. However, the "most successful research program ever designed" will never have a chance if it fails to receive management approval.

In order to gain this approval the public relations director therefore, has the responsibility of presenting to management the workings of the research project. This approval may be obtained by communicating to management four points: (1) an opportunity exists to support management in their overall responsibility, (2) this particular research project has merit because the findings will be relevant to the theme of the overall public relations campaign and management objectives, (3) the specific vehicles for gathering the data and the specific

mechanics involved, both identified in the research plan, are the most effective ones to determine the desired data, and (4) the measurement techniques in evaluating the data are valid.

In summation, research is a process of communication and consists of the following steps, all of which are inter-related. These steps involve the targeted public, the public relations staff, and management.

1. It is important that the objectives of the research project be clearly identified. Put down on paper the exact reason the project was initiated. Remember, the objectives of the research project are different from the objectives of the overall public relations campaign. The research project's objectives are designed so that the results will form the basis for the objectives of the public relations campaign, which in turn, support the goals of management.

2. Utility of the research project is the next step. Research is an expensive operation and management wants to be assured that the "ends justify the means." In other words, if the desired research objectives are met, will the research project have been worth the cost. Clearly defined objectives will add clarity to the value of the project.

3. The objectives of the research project cannot be met and the utility of the project will be limited unless the proper measurement approaches are used for the gathering of the data and evaluation. If the project is large and/or complex in scope, the utilization of a professional research firm should be considered.

Finally, the objectives of the research project, its utility, and the measurement techniques employed, need the consensus of management. Unless all three are accepted by management, the project will be

of little use. Management's acceptance of the decisions, which have been based on the research project, are also essential. These decisions are the starting point for the next part of the model, action, which supports the goals of management.

Action

The second part of the public relations communication model is action, and it consists of two supporting functions which are planning and policy access.

Planning

Planning involves putting together a program of action which will address and satisfy the requirements uncovered by research. The scope of the program will determine the degree other organizational departments are involved.

This action plan will facilitate management approval and help ensure internal communication between the public relations staff and other organizational departments which might be involved. The plan should contain four parts: (1) reason for the plan, (2) objectives of the plan, (3) means for accomplishment of the plan, and (4) costs of the plan.

Reason for the Plan

There will be many organizational departments involved in the execution of the program of action. These internal departments need to be fully informed as to why there is a need for action. If the establishment of this need is accomplished, gaining their commitment to the program of action is made considerably easier. In addition, top level

management is more likely to approve a program of action if it can see a need for one in the first place. Top level management can also better judge the merits of a program if it understands the reasons for its conception. Informing all relevant departments of the reason for the program is the first step in gaining internal support. This will enhance the program's potential for success.

Objectives of the Plan

The objectives are the statements of specific goals and the second step in gaining internal support. The objectives are designed to accomplish the reason for the plan. For example, an organization has just completed construction of a public park and picnic area on land that it donated to the city for such a purpose. The objectives could be to: (1) inform the city residents of the park, (2) have a special dedication ceremony, and (3) to follow the dedication ceremony with an organization sponsored picnic. Objectives are designed to accomplish specific purposes. Therefore, if objectives cannot be specifically and clearly stated, there is a good chance that there is no need for a program of action to be implemented.

Characteristics of specific and clearly stated objectives are rather judgmental but consider the following: (1) to increase public awareness, (2) to increase public awareness showing organization concern for public parks, (3) to increase public awareness showing organization concern for public parks by building and dedicating one to the city. Specific and clearly stated objectives are directly related to evaluation. Notice as the objectives increased in clarity so did the potential for specific and valid evaluation.

Means for Accomplishment
of the Plan

The means involve the tools of relaying information to the public. In order to gain the most from each tool that is utilized, an understanding of its working principles is essential. The public relations practitioner needs to have knowledge in this field or have direct access to one who does have the necessary knowledge.

The means for accomplishing the plan are directly related to the objectives. For example, if the organization has an employee problem, the means of presenting the plan would be mainly in the use of internal media. If the problem involved another organization, the means would be centered around meetings and conferences. And if the problem involved the general public, mass media would be employed.

Costs of the Plan

Some organizations determine public relations budgets on a fixed formula, such as a percentage of sales. Others fix budgets on the basis of management objectives. Either way, the costs of the program of action should be viewed in relation to the expected value of the program. The expected value of the program by management may be high, if management has directed the program, or it may be low if the public relations department has initiated the program and management is not committed to it. In other words, justification of costs are relative to management's interest in the program. At times, public relations will have the responsibility of creating a high interest in management regarding specific programs they want to promote.

Policy Access

In order for reciprocal understanding to take place between an organization and its publics, there has to be communication between the two. This communication should include an avenue for the public to have access to organizational policy formation. One avenue is the organization's public relations department.

An organization is constantly dealing with many publics and it is the responsibility of public relations to promote reciprocal understanding between the organization and all of these publics. Public relations does this through attempting to satisfy all the publics, while at the same time promoting organizational goals, objectives, policies, and so forth.

In order to satisfy a public it is sometimes necessary however, for organizational policies to be terminated or modified. If this situation presents itself, public relations must try to find a solution which will satisfy the public, while at the same time, maintain management objectives in relation to a modified or terminated policy.

Every organization has major policies which are fairly rigid. One of these major policies could be to maximize profits. An organization will also normally have minor policies which support the major ones and these can be more flexible. A minor policy might be the establishment of working hours from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. For a further understanding of policy access consider the following.

Research, accomplished by organization X, has determined that the large number of employees leaving the company plant at 5:00 P.M. is causing traffic congestion in the community. The local residents are unhappy with the situation. Public relations, through planning, has

come up with a possible solution. The organization could change to three shifts, each one being staggered fifteen minutes apart. Approval of the plan would involve a policy change. If management approved the new shifts, this would be an example of the public having access to organizational policy formation. The organization's policy on working hours would now be coinciding with the public wishes. Policy access is where the organization begins to move toward a merging posture with its public to enhance reciprocal understanding.

Transmission

Research based on communication, and action based on communication, have been the key parts of this public relations communication model thus far. The next step in the model is the relaying of the program of action to the identified public. The models in Chapter II refer to this stage as "communication" which implies the other parts of the models are not communication oriented, or at least minimize its importance. This author chooses to call this step simply "transmission." As with the other parts of this model, the transmission of the program of action is based on communication.

There are basically two types of action programs an organization is going to have a need to transmit to its public. These two types will be referred to as on-going and crisis, and they can be related to the two types of planning discussed earlier.

On-going action programs are associated with preventive planning. The purpose in this case is to provide information which will establish reciprocal understanding with the public and which will enhance public opinion in order to support the long range goal of maximizing

profits. The on-going action program should be formulated with the policy access function of planning in mind.

Crisis action programs are associated with remedial planning and immediate action. Like on-going programs, the general purpose is the same and policy access should be kept in mind. In this case however, an incident has occurred, or will occur, which will be detrimental to the organization. Here the program of action is involuntary and is designed for a specific purpose. A need exists for the organization to: (1) re-assure the public that it is still seeking to promote reciprocal understanding, (2) explain what caused the incident (in terms the public can understand), and (3) relate what steps are being taken to prevent a re-occurence.

This program of action is actually involuntary on the part of the organization because failure to respond to the incident breeds confusion, distrust, lack of confidence, and lack of concern, to name just a few of the possible negative results. A carefully planned and timed crisis action program can, however, re-establish public opinion to a more positive posture than it was prior to the unfavorable incident. These crisis action programs are for the self preservation of the organization when it finds itself on the wrong side of public opinion and is why management's approval of them is more easily obtained as opposed to on-going programs.

Feedback

Feedback is the fourth part of the public relations communication model. It is the part of the communication process which makes the model continuous in nature. It concludes one program and is the start-

ing point for future ones. The organization resources which were expended in a public relations program will not have been utilized properly unless feedback is obtained to know how the public received the program of action.

Two things, however, seem to prevent adequate feedback. First, the organization and the public relations staff automatically feel the program is/was a success because it looked so good on paper. It is just impossible for it to fail. Second, feedback is many times extremely hard to measure because it deals with changes in opinion. The public relations communication process has broken down however, when the public relations staff starts thinking of what it can do next, rather than actively seeking feedback to base the next program upon.

Feedback can come from information volunteered by the public concerned or it can come from public relations directed sources. These public relations initiated attempts at feedback should be directly related to the specific reasons and objectives of the campaign. In other words, it should reveal how effective the program of action was, what objectives were met or not met, and to what degree.

Feedback should also be received in reference to all aspects of the model. It is important to determine the effectiveness of each part of the model in relation to the objectives the specific part was designed to achieve.

Feedback involves evaluation to pinpoint the degree of success of the program and adjustment to make future programs more effective. Like the other three parts of the model, feedback is based on communication. This means communication between the organization and the public in receiving feedback, and communication between the public relations

staff and management to ensure proper evaluation and implementation of proper adjustments.

Evaluation

Evaluation is the analysis of the feedback in relation to the stated goals and objectives. Evaluation, like feedback, should be accomplished on each part of the public relations process as well as the program of action. The results of this evaluation should point out what the organization may expect in favorable returns because of the campaign and what will be the anticipated results and actions due to the failures of the campaign. Evaluation of the public relations process itself is valuable in order to have more effectiveness in the formulation and activation of future campaigns.

Evaluation can be difficult because of limited valid information or feedback. For example, public opinion may be hard to measure in terms of the program's effectiveness because all of the conditions under which the program was administered were not controllable. It cannot be definitely said that A was the cause of B.

Generally speaking there are scientific evaluation methods and empirical ones; both of which can be fallible in the measurement of a public relations program. The important thing is to make an attempt at evaluation. Communication should be strong among the public, the public relations staff, and management.

Adjustment

Adjustment, if feasible, should follow evaluation. Its primary purpose is to modify areas related to each part of the public relations communication process and the campaign which have been identified as

being weak through feedback and evaluation.

If evaluation has determined that insufficient research was the major reason the program of action was not as effective as planned, adjustments should be made during the next public relations program to give added emphasis to this area. These adjustments might be as simple as the public relations practitioner mentioning the fact to his staff, or it might involve extensive changes which would include formal written guidance. Adjustment is also related to the objectives of the campaign. These objectives could have been determined to be: (1) too encompassing, (2) too limited, (3) not relevant, or (4) unrealistic. Adjustments are then made after thorough discussions with the parties concerned.

Adjustments to the operational practices of the public relations staff can usually be routinely made by the public relations director. Adjustments to the campaign, and especially those involving policy changes or budget revisions will require management approval. If this is the case, it is the responsibility of the public relations director to communicate this need to management.

Concluding Comments

The model presented above is a public relations communication model. The importance of communication is distributed throughout the model with no one part having priority. The model is clearly designed around the definition of public relations arrived at in Chapter I. The next chapter will present a working application of the model.

CHAPTER IV

A WORKING APPLICATION

Chapters I, II, and III have presented a brief background relating to public relations. Definitions have been presented, typical public relations models have been discussed, and this author's public relations communication model was presented which gave a new perspective for the public relations process.

It should be noted that it is the blending of all components into a successful program that makes public relations effective. Therefore, this chapter will present additional ideas which, when blended together with the ones already presented, will enhance the potential of success for any public relations practitioner.

The Very Beginning

The place for a practitioner to begin emphasizing communication is during the initial job interview. The practitioner should not leave the interview, or accept employment, without asking a few questions of his own. The seven questions presented below are considered essential.

1. What do you feel public relations is? The practitioner should have a clear understanding of exactly the way public relations is perceived by management. Confusion and unexpected responsibilities will surface later on if the practitioner and management do not communicate on this point.

2. Who will be my immediate supervisor? An individual can

work for, and be responsible to, only one person. Realizing this sound management principle, it is recommended that the public relations director work directly for the highest level of authority possible. This will also prevent having to obtain intermediate approvals on programs which should be decided by top level management in the first place.

3. What authority will I have and from where will it be delegated? In order to carry out responsibilities, the practitioner will need to know the limits of her authority concerning all aspects of public relations activities. This authority should be delegated from her immediate supervisor.

4. Will I be consistently involved in the decision making process of management? Public relations is a staff function and management is line. However, it is desirable that the public relations director be a part of the decision making process. The primary objective of public relations is to prevent crisis involving the public, not simply to put out fires. The most innocent looking activity can easily turn into a severe problem without the chance for public relations to at least review the decision prior to implementation.

5. What will be the public relations budget? General and detailed planning are dependent on the amount of financial support. Budget has to be commensurate with expectations and responsibilities.

6. What will make up the staff of the public relations department? Projects, scope, and effectiveness correlate to number of available man hours. Like the budget, the staff has to correlate to expectations and responsibilities of the department.

7. What are the limits and definitions of control that the

parent company possesses (if there is a parent company)? This is obviously a factor in determining public relations programs for the subordinate company. In other words, there needs to be an understanding of the authority the subordinate company has in relation to its own public relations programs. A practitioner's supervisor can not give authority he does not possess.

Before accepting employment, the practitioner should decide whether or not she can meet the stated responsibilities based on management's answers to these questions.

The Public Relations Communication Model Revisited

The purpose of again looking at the four parts of the public relations communication model is not for a review, but to add clarity. Additional application ideas will be presented that were not discussed in previous chapters.

Research

Public relations programs begin with research and research should involve any group or person who has a bearing on the overall objective or goal. After the research project has been approved by management, there is additional preliminary work to be done. The following four steps should be explored.

1. The objective of the research project should be clear and concise. Essentially, the objective will be to find out what a specific public(s) thinks about something. The practitioner should ensure that the questions used during research are ones which will generate relevant findings. For example, if the question is asked, "Are you aware of the

new landscaping around organization X," the answer will not reveal the main purpose for the question which was, "Do you feel organization X is truly interested and concerned about the physical appearance of the community?" Research questions should be designed to accomplish the objectives of the research project.

2. Determine as early as possible who will conduct the research; the public relations staff, an internal organizational department, or a professional firm. Whoever it is, they should participate in all the planning of the research project.

3. Research, whether done by an internal department of the organization or a professional firm, can be very expensive. Preliminary estimates should be made as soon as planning starts and formal bids obtained prior to any field work.

4. Every research project should proceed according to a time schedule. Timeliness is important as delays may invalidate findings. In addition, timely results are a necessity if immediate corrective action to the problem is required.

After the research of public opinion has been completed, the analysis of the data is next. Communication is the basis for gathering the data and it is also the basis for interpreting the data. It is imperative that the public opinion data be interpreted correctly because the action phase of the model is dependent upon valid research findings. It has been previously stated that the research project's objectives are designed so that the results will form the basis for the program of action. Research projects which display invalid findings will not produce an effective program of action which, in turn, will not support overall management objectives. These interpretations are based on

critical judgments. Chances for correct analysis are greatly enhanced
through communication and discussion by all parties connected with the
research project. This communication and discussion is accomplished by
the use of briefings, conferences, informal meetings, and study of the
research report, to name but a few of the methods.

Research often uncovers public opinion concerning images of the
organization. For the purposes of a public relations program, there are
two types of images, brand image and organization image. A brand image
is aimed primarily at consumers while an organization image finds its
importance in the community or publics of which it is a part. A brand
image and an organization image are different. A brand image is what
the organization says its product is, and the organization's image is
what the public perceives the organization itself to be. It is possible
for the brand image to be changed through advertising but not the organi-
zational image. If the organization is marked negative by the public
because it is negative, no public relations program will change that
image. If this is the case, the practitioner's responsibility is three-
fold: (1) to communicate to management the fact concerning the poor
organizational image, (2) present to management recommendations to cor-
rect this internal problem, and (3) formulate a public relations program
to inform the public of the ultimate positive changes.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that a primary consider-
ation of research is listening. Human egos make listening a very diffi-
cult chore and the practitioner should be constantly aware of this
potential problem. He should not fall into the trap of saying something
to the effect, "I understand the research revealed the following but I
know differently." Listening is the primary ingredient of communica-

tion, and communication is the primary ingredient of research.

Action

When research leaves one drowning in data, it is time to set aside a period for concentration for the planning of the program of action. Clarify the objectives of the campaign which the research seems to suggest are needed. Write these objectives down as they will be re-addressed during the evaluation step. Remember, campaign objectives have their basic roots in the overall policies and goals of management. Research objectives establish where the organization is in relation to these overall policies and goals.

Research will also identify specific publics to which the campaign should be directed. Different publics may require different information and different means in reaching them. For example, if the organization is involved in a community school problem, the organization's position could be presented to the community in a general manner through radio, television, and newspaper. Their position might be expounded upon however, when it is given before the school board.

The success or failure of a public relations campaign depends strongly on the creativity of the practitioner. Creativity can come from several persons brainstorming together, from one person's idea, or from the adoption of someone else's idea that has already been employed. Entertain all ideas and have a thorough discussion of them all in relation to the reason and objectives of the campaign.

On-going action programs can be difficult to formulate however, and at times, even more difficult to "sell" to management. Formulation can be difficult because there is no immediate problem that is yelling

for a solution. This lack of a glaring problem is also the reason it is difficult to obtain management approval for these on-going action programs. The key is ingenuity in identifying a need and then convincing management of that need. Identification of a need comes from internal staff communication by: (1) reviewing past programs, (2) reviewing present organizational goals and objectives, and (3) by keeping a pulse on the public opinion. Management is more readily convinced of the need of an on-going action program if the four steps of planning are carefully followed.

Action also involves a plan for contingency matters. Contingency planning is designed for the purpose of adding support to the campaign when problems arise unexpectedly. This type of planning is best handled by having a broad outline which could be followed and discussed by the public relations staff if contingency actions were needed. For example, what if the publicity is pushed off the news by a disaster. Is it best to wait two days to implement the campaign or is it best to implement it with other sources to transmit the campaign to the public?

After the public relations director is completely satisfied with the program of action, it needs to be presented to management for final approval. Approval should not be difficult because of the previous communication with management during formulation of the campaign. One of the greatest dangers in presenting a plan is not anticipating questions and challenges. Opposing points of view or constructive criticism should be listened to, but do not let a good program be nibbled to death. Again, this should not be a problem because of prior communication with management and other involved organization departments. Be prepared for surprises however. After approval by management

be sure duties and responsibilities are written down so there will be no
misunderstanding.

With management's approval in hand, the program of action needs
to be relayed to the targeted public. The tools for communicating with
the public come in the form of the spoken word, printed word, and the
image. There are four well known and established media tools: (1)
television, (2) radio, (3) newspaper, and (4) magazine. There are many
in addition to these four and some of them are listed below for a ready
reference. They include: house publications; handbooks, manuals,
books; letters, bulletins; recordings; bulletin boards, posters, bill-
boards; information racks; inserts and enclosures; institutional adver-
tising, identity programs; meetings and conferences; speaker's bureaus;
public address systems, telephone newsline; interpersonal network;
motion pictures, slide films, tapes; closed-circuit television; displays
and exhibits; open houses and plant tours; staged events; and art pro-
grams.

It should be remembered that the most effective form of communi-
cation, but not necessarily the most advantageous, is still a two-way
personal conversation between two people. Use this form whenever pos-
sible.

A final note regarding the program of action. The public rela-
tions staff should look at each possible plan through four different
perspectives.

1. A look backward to review all the factors revealed by
research. Will this plan correct the problem to the fullest extent pos-
sible?

2. A look inside in which the assembled facts and opinions are

considered in the light of the organization's objectives.

3. A look around in which there is study of like situations in similar organizations; political, social, and economic trends; and the mood of the times.

4. A long look ahead to ensure the plan is supporting the long range goals of the organization.

Transmission

Even though a program of action is visible to the public, it still needs to be reinforced by transmitting its message to the public. Many times this is accomplished through the avenue of mass media. The following questions are useful in trying to determine that medium.

1. What publics are to be reached, and what does research tell about the media received by these publics and the credibility ratings for each medium?

2. When do these publics need to be reached, and by what date do they need to receive the message in order to respond to it?

3. How much needs to be spent, and how much will the budget support?

After the above three questions are evaluated, the following four need to be asked.

1. Which medium reaches the broadest segment of the target publics at the lowest cost?

2. Which one has the highest credibility and what is its cost?

3. Which medium can be counted on to deliver the message within the necessary time element for the message to be effective?

4. Should a single medium be used? If not, which media should be used to complement each other?

In working with the media it should be kept in mind there is a difference between advertising and publicity. Advertising is paid-for broadcast time or print media space designed to specifically promote the organization and/or product. Publicity is <u>news</u>, good or bad, about the organization and/or product which appears in broadcast or print media.

During the actual step of relaying the program of action, or message, to the identified publics, there are several conditions which could have an effect on the effectiveness of this effort. These conditions are not discussed in detail but are presented for consideration and to point out the need for internal and external communication alike. The first three are related to the receiver, the fourth to the message, and the fifth to the sender.

1. Selective listening is condition number one. Simply stated, people hear what they want to hear. If my daughter is in another room and I tell her, "Julie, help your mother with the dishes," she inevitably will not hear me. Yet if I say, "Julie, let's go get an ice cream cone sometime," she will come bounding out of the room stating she is ready to go. Not only has she heard me this time, she has "heard" me say something I did not. Anderson and Meyer go into further detail by discussing selective attention, selective perception, and selective retention, and relate the concepts to a model.[22]

2. Basic needs of individuals such as security, knowledge, power, group acceptance, and so forth, relate to their acceptance of the message. A message associated with individuals' ego-related needs is a sure method for message acceptance.

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[22]James A. Anderson and Timothy P. Meyer, <u>Man and Communication</u> (Washington, D.C.: College and University Press, 1974).

3. Individuals possess a basic need to have harmony between their needs and desires, and the pressures put upon them. An individual inherently accepts what enhances harmony and shields himself from what might create dissonance within him.

4. Condition number four deals with the fidelity of the message itself. This involves audio and/or visual clarity, semantics, and ability of the intended public which will receive the message.

5. The last condition is related to the skill and experience of the communicator. Masterful skills and experience can work wonders. Communicators that are "almost right" for the occasion are like parachutes that are "almost right" for the occasion.

The message which is transmitted to the public must be supported by a program of action. Stated facts alone do not persuade.

Feedback

A public relations campaign, whether successful or not, is never complete until feedback has been received, and evaluation and adjustment have been concluded. It is not only important to know what worked and what did not work, but to know the reasons also. In addition, many times a certain program, or part of a program, was a success only through accident. To answer these questions it is important to keep the analysis on a professional basis. Egos are fragile things. Frank discussions are not designed to crack these egos but to find out why.

Reports are the vehicles whereby the practitioner details public relations activities, actions, and results achieved over a specified period of time. The report is an excellent way of stating accom-

plishment in quantitative terms. On the other hand, it is generally a poor way of stating accomplishment in qualitative terms. Feedback and the evaluation thereof, may also be accomplished through group and committee meetings involving briefings and presentations.

The lack of an effective and visible feedback program which involves evaluation and adjustment is one of the major reasons management tends to view some public relations departments with skepticism.

Proper adjustments can only be made through proper evaluation. Questions like the following are typical in a communication setting with adjustment as the subject.

1. Should the entire program of action be cancelled? If not, what parts of the program, if any, should be retained?

2. Should the objectives be changed? Should they be more defined?

3. Does the feedback and evaluation thereof warrant a policy change?

4. Should an additional program of action be initiated to support the original one?

5. Can additional benefits and advantages be gained through this successful program of action?

6. How can the public relations department make the most of a specific opportunity that presented itself?

It is the public relations director's responsibility to make these decisions and then to convince management of their need. It is a judgment call on his part when a program of action is abandoned and another put in its place. The potential for successful decisions is greatly increased however, when communication is employed among the

publics, the public relations staff, and management. Each attempt at public relations needs to be better than the one previous. The only way to accomplish this essential goal of improvement is to evaluate and adjust in relation to research, action, and transmission.

Decision Making

A public relations practitioner is going to be faced with many choices during a campaign. Decision making is a continuous operation. The practitioner should receive as much input as possible concerning any subject on which a decision must be made, in order to ensure the complete picture has been presented. This author has thirteen years experience concerning decision making, which includes three years of being in charge of an organization that had an annual budget of half a million dollars. There were occasions in which a different decision would have been made if one more piece of existing information had been brought forth. A proper decision can only be made after all information regarding the problem has surfaced and been discussed.

Decision making can be quite difficult, especially if the line of action is not clear cut. If this line of action is hazy, the practitioner should review the research and planning steps to ensure proper communication has taken place. Has the practitioner participated in proper communication with the rest of his public relations staff? It is a rare situation when proper research and planning will not provide a visible plan of action, especially if communication has been properly utilized.

Decision making is more than the term implies. Anyone can make a decision by deciding to do nothing. However, through experience, it

is this author's firm opinion that a poor plan is better than no plan at all because a plan which is never initiated can not be evaluated. If a plan generates poor results it can be discarded until the process uncovers additional potentially effective actions.

At least the organization is doing something to try to correct the public relations problem. If there is not even a plan, the organization is doing nothing and this means the organization and its publics are moving in opposite directions. Unfortunately, the movement in the opposite direction always seems to generate a faster pace than the movement to draw an organization and its publics closer together.

Conclusion

Examples of successful public relations cases may be found in most any public relations book. Unfortunately, examples of unsuccessful ones may also be found. A review of any of these cases will generally reveal that the overall reason for success hinged on communication being utilized and emphasized throughout the campaign. Conversely, when a campaign has failed, a lack of communication at one or more parts of the campaign can usually be found. The case in Chapter II illustrates the point.

The purpose of this thesis was to present a public relations communication model which emphasizes communication throughout the process. In so doing, it has been shown that communication is the core of effective (1) research, (2) action, (3) transmission, and (4) feedback. The comments contained in this chapter all revolve around communication, both internal and external.

It should be remembered that very few ideas involving public

relations are infallible because of the many variables involved. This public relations communication model will be affected by the organization involved, its leadership, management of the process, individuals involved in its activation, and of course the publics themselves. However, the noted difference in this model, as opposed to previous ones, does increase the potential effectiveness of any public relations program.

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